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Officials Won't See Lakeside Station

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PLANT CITY - A day after city planning and zoning director Rob Anders was informed the media would have to be invited if city commissioners and planning board members toured the site of a proposed 2,600-home development, Anders noted that only the mayor and the landowner would visit the site.

With time drawing near for a public hearing on Lakeside Station, the city's largest proposed subdivision, the city staff was asked to set up a tour of the property, led by the developer. The tour was to be for city commissioners and planning board members.

City officials have bantered back and forth for more than a year about design elements and lot sizes for Lakeside Station. They recently agreed to conduct a public hearing and vote July 14 on a requested change in zoning from industrial use to a mixed use that would include residential and commercial construction.

The 1,280 acres is near long-time polluter **Coronet Industries**. Included on the proposed Lakeside Station site is an old landfill that was closed some time in the late 1960s.

City Public Works director Kathy Burke, who received three environmental impact reports from the developer referencing the landfill, said late last month, she had no knowledge of the landfill.

"I don't know anything about it. I was not aware," she said.

Mayor Bill Dodson said the city staff assured him that home sites would not be built atop the landfill.

Dodson asked city staff members in April to set up the tour so he could review the property and location of the landfill in relation to the proposed home sites. According to an e-mail Anders wrote to the developer in April, City Manager David Sollenberger suggested the proposed tour include the city commission and planning board members.

But when Anders tried to arrange the tour with the developer's land manager, Bob Appleyard, he received no immediate reply.

Then after a second request, Anders received an e-mail on June 23 from Appleyard, stating, "I have forwarded your request to the property owner, [Consolidated Minerals Inc.] noting any such tour would have to be open to the media and, perhaps, to the public under the government in the sunshine laws."

Appleyard could not be reached for comment.



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Because of Florida's open meetings laws, no two commissioners can legally meet to discuss city business without first notifying the media.

In an e-mail Anders wrote June 23 to Jim Shimberg, an attorney for the property owners, Anders asked that Shimberg arrange a tour for city commissioners. ``Would you please arrange this, or have the property owners authorize Robert Appleyard to conduct such a tour?" Anders wrote after receiving the reply from Appleyard.

On June 24, Anders sent an e-mail notifying Appleyard and Allen Murphy, who represents Consolidated Minerals, that Dodson, alone, would tour the land with the property owner, not the developer. ``So public notice of this tour is not required since multiple commissioners would not be going," he wrote.

``It was a slip of the mind," Anders said, referring to his attempts to arrange a tour led by the developers.

``I was just doing what I was directed to do - and I didn't think about it until later."

``I seemed to be the only one who wanted to take the trip," Dodson said. ``I never heard any interest from the group as a whole. But, if I did, of course, we would have to comply with government in the Sunshine and make certain it was a publicly held meeting."

At least one commissioner already visited the site, and says a tour led by the developer would not have been a wise idea. ``I toured the property earlier with a guy from the county," Commissioner Richard Glorioso said Tuesday. ``I didn't want to have the developer give me a tour because that's getting into quasi-judicial areas. It's not legal because we have to vote on it."

This story can be found at: <http://plantcity.tbo.com/plantcity/MGAY7JK2SHD.html>

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